

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4502

October 3, 2007

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

I am writing to urge you to assign Diplomatic Security agents from the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad to protect the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) investigation team that is traveling to Iraq to investigate the September 16, 2007, shooting incident involving Blackwater USA, in which at least 17 Iraqi civilians died. This step would help alleviate the appearance of a conflict of interest and hopefully contribute to the credibility of this investigation in the eyes of the people of Iraq.

It is crucial to this investigation that the FBI have access to Iraqi civilians and others who may have witnessed this incident. Traveling outside the Green Zone requires protective security details which are often filled by Blackwater and other private security contractors. We all understand the security risks and the limited personnel resources. However, this investigation and its context merit special consideration. I believe the Department of State's own Federal security personnel would be more appropriate for the protection required by the FBI during the conduct of this investigation. Diplomatic Security agents have ably met security protection requirements in every other country in the world, and there is no reason they could not do so in this instance.

The Department's reliance on private security contractors with apparently little oversight contributed to the very incident that requires investigation. I recommend that you utilize Diplomatic Security agents to avoid any potential conflict of interest in this investigation.

Sincerely,



PATRICK LEAHY
Chairman
State, Foreign Operations Subcommittee

cc: Ambassador Ryan Crocker